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INCENSE

At this time of the year we hear much about frankincense, gold and myrrh for they were the gifts brought to the Christ child by the wise men (Matt 2:11). It is interesting that all three play a large part in Orthodox worship. In the **Theology of Worship** we read: To an Orthodox Christian it is of utmost importance that the act of worship should express the joy and beauty of the Kingdom of heaven. Without the dimension of the beautiful our worship will never succeed in being prayer in the fullest sense, prayer of the heart as well as the reasoning brain. This joy and beauty of the Kingdom cannot be properly expounded in abstract arguments and logical explanations; it has to be experienced, not discussed. And it is above all through symbolic and ritual actions - through the burning of incense, through the lighting of a lamp or candle before an icon - that this living experience is rendered possible. These simple gestures express, far better than any words, our attitude towards God, all our love and adoration; and without such actions our worship would be grievously impoverished.

Why offer incense or burn candles? Why make prostrations or the Sign of the Cross? ... Each exists because it expresses something which cannot be expressed in any other way. If it were possible to say in words why we burn candles and incense, then we could rest content with the verbal explanation and forego the symbolic act altogether. The whole value of the symbol in worship is that it expresses something which cannot be said through the spoken word alone, that it reaches a part of our being which cannot be touched by rational arguments. The symbol is on the one a hand simpler and more immediately accessible than a verbal explanation, and on the other hand it penetrates more deeply into the heart of reality.

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Hymn To St. Nicholas

O who loves Nicholas the saintly.
O who serves Nicholas the saintly,
Him will Nicholas receive,
and give help in time of need,
Holy Father Nicholas.

O who dwells in God's holy mansions,
Is our help on the land and oceans.
He will guard us from all ills,
Keep us pure and free from sins,
Holy Father Nicholas.

O kto, kto Nikolaja l'ubit,
O kto, kto Nikolaju sluzit,
Tomu svjaryj Nikolaj,
Na svjakij cas pomahaj,
Nikolaj, Nikolaj.

O kto, kto zivet v jeho dvori,
Pomoscnik na zeml'i i mori.
Izmet jeho ot napasti
Ne dast' jemu v hrichi vpasti,
Nikolaj, NIkolaj

THEY MEET AGAIN

An alternative reading for the day after the Nativity is the account of Joseph and Mary fleeing to Egypt which is found in Matthew 2:13-23. An account of this is given in some Synaxises for this day.

It seems that while Joseph, the most pure Virgin, and the divine Infant were journeying to Egypt, robbers stopped them in the desert, with the intention of stealing the donkey that carried their meager belongings, and, at times, the Mother and Child.

One of the thieves, noticing how beautiful the Babe was, marveled exclaiming: "If God were to assume flesh, He could not be fairer than this Child!" He then forebade his companions to harm the travelers.

The most pure Mother was much relieved and assured the robbers: "One day this Infant will reward you richly for having protected Him."

Ironically, many years later, that

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FOLLOW SCRIPTURE

The Orthodox Church differs from those of the Western tradition by putting more emphasis on the Resurrection of Christ rather than His Birth. This follows the scriptures where the Gospels tell more passion stories, less birth stories. Christianity's answer to human pain and doubt has from the very beginning been not the creche but the Cross – the self-sacrificial passion of Jesus, the empty tomb and its transformation of human hope.

What do the Gospels say?

St. Matthew has an infancy narrative, but its focus is on Gentiles coming to Jesus, the messianic promise being taken from Israel and given to the larger world, and the Holy Family fleeing to Egypt to escape King Herod. (Matt 2:1-16)

St. Mark says nothing of Jesus' birth. For Mark, it was the baptism by St. John that launched Jesus' messianic ministry, not the miraculous birth in the city of David. (Mark 1:9-11)

While St. John's only reference to Jesus' earthly origin is an ambiguous disagreement among onlookers about whether a messiah could come from Galilee, as opposed to Bethlehem – a dialogue that suggests that he (John) knew of Nazareth but not of Bethlehem (John 7:41-42). He mentions Joseph's name but not Mary's. His only concern for origins is to place Jesus at the dawn of creation and to put John the Baptist in his secondary place.

Only St. Luke tells of the stable, birth, shepherds and angels. (Luke 2:1-20) As profound as those details are, not one of them appears again in Luke. In fact, Mary herself disappears after the second chapter. Jesus isn't remembered by any of the evangelists as ever talking about His birth.

Does this make Christmas an unimportant Holy Day? Not at all. After all, the coming of Jesus did launch new

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CHRONOLOGY

DECEMBER 2003

DIED: **Fr. Michael Zelneronok** (retired) in Crystal River, FL. He was the oldest priest in the OCA listing and the last to be mitred.

Fr. Cyril Stavrevsky in Rochester, NY

CHOIR DIRECTOR IS NEEDED. Contact Fr. Michael Psenechnuk of St. Mary Carpatho-Russian Parish in Yonkers, NY. Phone 914/963-5549.

POCHAEV MONASTERY belongs to the state. However, it is currently given to the monastic community for use. It is located in Western Ukraine and is one of the oldest Orthodox Monasteries.

ONE OF THE BEST recordings of the Divine Liturgy has been reissued because of demand. It has both the priest, with an excellent voice, and the fabulous choir of the Russian Liturgical Singers, directed by George Margitich. Sung in Slavonic. This is highly recommended. Send $18 for CD and $13 for cassette (pp included) to Harry Nalesnik, PO Box 1285, Montclair, NJ 07042. Greatly appreciated by choirs, to learn traditional phrasing and tempo, by lovers of music, by those confined to home and unable to attend a Divine Liturgy, etc.

CHRISTMAS CAROL BOOK in 4-part harmony in English and in original languages available from John Sutko, 8020 South Major Ave., Burbank, IL 60459-2025. Phone for quantity prices 708/424-3592. One copy is $17 (pp included).

RUSSIA ENGAGES THE WORLD, 1453-1825 is an exhibition at the New York Public Library, which will run until January 31, 2004. The exhibit is made up of the copious Russian collection amassed over 150 years. Admission is free. The library is located on 5th Avenue and 42nd Street. Call: 212/869-8089 or www.nypl.org for days and hours open.

THE VATICAN has stopped suspending married men ordained to the priesthood for service in the Eastern Catholic churches of North America and Australia. Married men have been ordained to the priesthood in Eastern Europe.

TWO POSITIONS ARE OPEN at the Orthodox Christian Mission Center in St. Augustine, FL. For info call 1-877-463-6784 or missions@ocmc.org

THE RECENTLY RECOGNIZED ST. NICHOLAI (VELIMIROVIC) wrote twelve songs for a spiritual renewal movement which he led in Serbia between the World Wars. These songs are now available on CD for $14 plus $2 postage from St. Paisius Serbian Orthodox Monastery, PO Box 1075, Safford, AZ 85548. The songs are sung by the nuns of the monastery in Serbian. Lyrics and an introduction are included.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE COUNSELING will be part of the curriculum of the 4th year students at St. Herman's Seminary in Alaska. "Substance abuse is a widespread problem for both the native and non-native people of Alaska, which the Church confronts daily," said the bishop. The population of Alaska is 37.5 percent Orthodox Christians spread over 586,000 square miles on which are located 87 churches and chapels served by 25 priests. The International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC) is helping with the program.

THE NATIONAL SISTERHOOD OF PRESVYTERES met with the Archbishop of the Greek Archdiocese to discuss goals for the coming years. The sisterhood has developed a number of outreach programs for retired, widowed, caregiver and new priest wives. For info on the organization go to www.nsp.goarch.org

THOSE WHO WATCHED HALLMARK CHANNEL on September 28 enjoyed the program The Other Holy Land. It showed how four geographical areas - Cappadocia, Constantinople, Ephesus and Symrna - played a part in the development of Christianity. Videotape copies of the program are available for $19.99 plus $6 shipping. Order from GOTelecom at 1-800-888-6835.

MY PRAYER JOURNAL is a colorful 32-page booklet designed to encourage children in their prayer life. The book contains Bible verses, quotes from the Church Fathers, excerpts from the Divine Liturgy, suggested prayers, activities and facts. For individual copies go online www.iocc.org/journal. For bulk copies contact Religious Education Department at 1-800-566-1088.

THE ART OF THE RUSSIAN MATRYOSHKA by Rett Erti and Rick Hibbern is available from Vernissage Press for $40. It gives the history and how these nesting dolls are made of linden wood. Most are made in Sergiev Posad. This is the town where the famed St. Sergius Monastery or Lavra can also be found. Order from your bookstore or www.vernissage.us

ACCORDING TO THE U.S. CENSUS OF 2000, New York State has the highest number of individuals of Russian heritage. Total percentage of people with Russian heritage in the U.S. is 0.94%.

THE HOUSE OF MERCY in Minsk, Belarus is the first multifunctional social center of the Orthodox Church to be built in the Commonwealth of Independent States. The compound hosts 13 charitable projects intended to give spiritual, medical and social aid to the poor and disabled. Hot free meals are offered at the canteen, while the Orthodox Fellowship of Physicians and Sisterhood of Charity give medical aid. There is also a literature workshop, a center for mental health, one for distribution of humanitarian aid, a Sunday School and facilities for icon-painting, embroidery, singing and drawing. The House can accommodate 150.



NAMES OF THE THREE WISE MEN

The Gospel according to Saint Matthew is the only Gospel that speaks of "Magi." The evangelist does not call them, "kings," nor does he say how many there were. It is assumed that they were three in number because they brought three gifts: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. The historian Tertulian is the first to call them kings and in later tradition they are give the names: Melchior, Balthasar and Gasper. The Orthodox Church commemorates their money on the Day of the Nativity of our Lord.

The Magi (magos) are astrologers of the Persian priestly caste, and some believe that they were practicers of the Zoroastrian religion. They served as interpreters for the kings and were experts in the study of the heavens. They were led to Bethlehem by a bright star that pointed the way to the infant Jesus." (Matthew 2:9)

Various names have been given to the Magi: Hormizdah, Yazdegerd and Perozdh are mentioned in one account; in another: Hor, Basanater and Karsudan. The Western tradition names: Balthasar, Melchior and Gasper. These names were first used by Origen (+254) and become popular in the Sixth Century.

Tradition states that our Lady let each of the Magi hold Jesus in their arms. They were given some of His baby clothes to bring back to the East. When they returned to the East, they were baptized by the Apostle Thomas in the year 40.

The Church of Saint Appollinare Nuovo in Ravenna, Italy contains a majestic mosaic which depicts Balthasar as a middle aged with a black beard, Gasper as old and with a white beard and Melchior as as young and beardless man.

Western Christian tradition states that they were martyred for the faith. Their relics were brought to Constantinople and then to Milan, Italy. In the 12th century, they were placed in the Cathedral of Cologne, Germany where they are venerated by the faithful.

Raymond J. Mastroberte,
Iconographer

"Wise men still seek Him."

(Continued from front page)

INCENSE

On the purely pragmatic level all the beauty and symbolism in our worship is unnecessary and useless. We can use odor-destroying sprays instead of incense, neon lighting instead of candles. But the human being is not simply a pragmatic and utilitarian animal, and those who look more deeply into human nature will quickly appreciate how much we need this "useless" beauty...

To pray and to worship is to perceive the spiritual beauty of the heavenly Kingdom; to express that beauty alike through words, through poetry and music, through art and symbolic acts, and through our whole lives; and in this way to extend the divine beauty in the world around us; transforming and transfiguring the fallen creation.

"(They) fell down and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh." (Matt 2:11)

(Continued from front page)

THEY MEET AGAIN

same thief was the one who was crucified with Christ. He was the one who repented and he is the one to whom the Lord said: "Assuredly, I say to you, today, you will be with Me in Paradise." (Luke 23:43)

With his death, the Mother of God's prophecy was fulfilled, and the robber received his rich reward.

(Continued from front page)

FOLLOW SCRIPTURE

creation. Our hope is grounded in what began in Bethlehem. But as we see according to Orthodox teaching, it should not end there.

(Continued from page 63)

RECIPE CORNER

thickened. Add to bean or pea and potato mixture. Add salt and pepper, to taste.

Peel potato. Cut into chunks. Boil until soft. Drain. Add salt and pepper and some of the sauteed onion and oil.

Buy can or better still a packet of sauerkraut. Drain, rinse with cold water. Fry in oil with some of the sauteed onions. Or make soup, using sauerkraut instead of beans or peas as in the above recipe.

Buy dried prunes or mixed fruit. Cook according to directions. This is compote or uzvar. Use juice or eat with kutia or grain in next recipe.

Kutia is a must because it is made with grain and sweetened with honey and symbolizes the Resurrection. The easiest grain to use is rice. But wheat is best. Boil according to directions on package. When cooked, add honey to taste. Some families add poppy seeds and/or raisins. You can make this the day before, as it is served at room temperature.

Wine and tea.

Place white cloth on eating surface. If possible, buy a small bit of straw in a craft shop. Put under center of cloth. Have candle to light. Place in a candlestick or a glass with some uncooked grain.

Recite the tropar for the Nativity before eating.

"Thy Nativity O Christ our Lord has shown forth the light of knowledge to the world, for through it, those who studied the stars, learned from a star to worship Thee, the Sun of Righteousness, and to know Thee, the Orient from on high, O Lord, Glory to Thee."

"Rozdestvo tvoje Christe Boze nash, Vozsija mirovi svit razuma, V nam bo szizdam sluzasciji svizdoju ucahusja, Tebi klanatisja Solncu pravdi. Hospdi, slava tebi."

There are greetings and various traditional sayings and customs. They differ from family to family. This article only gives the minimal instructions. Keep at least these.

MISSIONARY
Part 3

As our skiff pulled onto the shore at Ouzinkie, our small band of missionaries looked hopefully toward the next few days. We all had sincere desires to serve, but serving God is not always simple as I soon discovered. Regardless of our hopes and good intentions, plans may not go as expected. As a first-time missionary, I had questions and expectations and, yes, even fears. This was a new experience, and I wondered if I was worthy of the calling. It was a new friend, though, who shared some wise advice. “Open your heart to God,” she gently counseled, “and let Him lead you.” I recalled those words a number of times in the days ahead.

After we disembarked and the men and women settled into separate lodgings, we met for a tour through the village. Dense forests surround Ouzinkie, and the only way to the village is by boat or small plane. As we walked along quiet dusty roads, four-wheelers occasionally passed by with the driver always greeting us with a smile and a wave. All around us fir trees reached into the sky and moss grew thicker than I had ever seen before. We were introduced to large, juicy salmon berries and the amber colored Russian berries and feasted on them along our path.

During our walk, children joined us and became our unofficial welcoming committee. Their friendly chatter made us feel right at home. For me, this all seemed a dream. Here I was on Spruce Island. Tomorrow I would be teaching the descendants of St. Herman's orphans.

For the next two days, over two dozen children and teens participated in Ouzinkie's first Vacation Church School. The VCS was held in the Tribal Center, a new and spacious facility that was perfect for everything from arts and crafts projects to puppet shows. We prayed, sang, and ate lunch together. With the door wide open on these beautiful August days, family dogs freely roamed in and patiently waited for their young masters.

One afternoon we were provided with a picnic right on the shore. With this idyllic setting, this was an afternoon that one would want to remember long after returning home. But even with these beautiful surroundings, I felt troubled. I had heard of spiritual warfare but had not really understood it; that is until now. I will always be grateful to one of my teammates who guided me through this time and reminded me of my true purpose for being there.

On our final evening in Ouzinkie, the parishioners of Nativity of Our Lord Russian Orthodox Church hosted a dinner in our honor. Women and children who had become our friends in this short time were joined by men who had returned from fishing and other members of the community. We were entertained by young women who performed native Aluutiq dances in beautiful costumes. It was a festive atmosphere, but the dinner ended much too soon.

Later that evening, we boarded the skiff for our return to Kodiak. A group of adults, teens, and children waited on shore to say good-bye. It wasn't really farewell, though, for in a few days we would be returning to the island, not as missionaries but as pilgrims.

Next month – Pilgrimage to Spruce Island

Margaret Pysarchyk

PRESS FUND

I appreciate all the help I am receiving. Most of you who write and call are showing great interest in seeing that The Orthodox Herald is continued. The cheering section is unexpected and a great boost. Spasebo/Thank you for your letters of encouragement and for your contributions to the Press Fund. Anyone who does any printing has a hard time understanding how we can keep in business charging so little for a subscription. My answer is much of the work is done gratis and our readers are aware of our need. They feel the paper is theirs and help!

This month we were blessed by notes and contributions from: Jean Kutzer, Anne Dorozynski, Walter and Tania Booriakin, Mary Gresko, Catherine Shaffchick, Mary Kinn, Irene Allen, Donald Belinsky, Deacon John Oleynik, Ethel Watlock, Larissa Williams, Sharon Schrenzel, A. Pinko, Janet Jupin, Nicholas Halesky, Constantina Morgan, Tom Swift, Dorothy Wasylko, Anonymous.

Paul E. Godfrey for prayers for Paul and Mother Ellen. Mary Kochmaruk for health of Camilla Gezzarella. Steve and Lenora Evancho for health of Claudia Sulin, Matushka Nina Stroyen, Elizabeth Uhrin, Michael Turr.

Nettie Jury in memory of Fr. Basil, John Jury on the 25th anniversary of his passing, and newly-departed Helen Chris. William Holak in memory of his brother Harry and his sister Emily H. Bartosewich. Minodora Burkhardt in memory of George Brodna. Steve and Lenora Evancho in memory of Sulin parents, Evancho parents, Fr. Basil, and George Mehaly.

BIBLE QUIZ
WHO SAID?

1. After I am waxed old, shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?
2. Can the blind lead the blind? Shall they not both fall into the ditch?
3. Cast out this bondswoman and her son; for the son of this bondswoman shall be heir with my son.
4. Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee; for wither thou goest, I will go.
5. Behold the handmaiden of the Lord.
6. Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons.
7. This is one of the Hebrews' children.

ANSWERS:
1. Sarah (Genesis 18:12)
2. Jesus (Luke 6:39)
3. Sarah(Genesis 21:10)
4. Ruth (1:16)
5. Mary (Luke 1:38)
6. Peter (Acts 10:34)
7. Pharaoh's daughter (Exodus 2:6)

CHANGES IN DEPICTION

Artists through the ages had different ideas about how to depict Mary the Mother of God and Joseph. In the very early works, as shown in our ikons, Mary seems to be detached from the child. They both have contemplative or sad expressions. The modern pictures of Mary and Child more often show her as an adoring mother.

Joseph is also shown apart from the Mother and Child in early ikons and carvings. This to symbolize that he is not Jesus' father. In some ikons you will note that he is asleep or shown in a corner away from the actual scene of Mary and Jesus. In later works we find Joseph more prominently active, attending to Mary (His wife) and the child. Nowadays, we see ikons of the three of them depicted and named as the Holy Family.

Ikonographers in the Orthodox Church must follow a certain pattern which reflects the teachings of the Church about Mary, the Mother of God, Jesus, and St. Joseph.

MEMORIES

Growing up in a small town in western Pennsylvania with my father, mother and two brothers was special to me. Portage was a small place, but everyone knew about our Orthodox Faith, the Orthodox Church and our Orthodox holidays. No one thought it strange that we celebrated Christmas on January 7th and that sometimes our Easter holiday was on a different date than others celebrated. People just accepted our uniqueness and recognized our celebration.

Looking back and remembering those days, I recall how warm and family-oriented these special times were. As a child, I remember how excited we would get as Christmas approached. Many of my friends and neighbors had Christmas on December 25, and I questioned why our Christmas was celebrated on a different day; but it was explained that it really was the same date, December 25, but on another calendar. As the western calendar December 25 was ending, my mother would remark "that the first Christmas was over and we still had ours to look forward to." With great anticipation, the house got cleaned and special foods were purchased and much cooking and baking was done.

Working in the coal mines wasn't very profitable, and our parents couldn't provide much, but to us, what we had seemed wonderful. I remember the big bowl of oranges and nuts that were special for Christmas, our Christmas trees and the anticipation. Relatives came from out-of-town to be with us for Christmas Eve Holy Supper and generally stayed for Christmas Day or possibly even longer.

Svajtyj Vecer, the night of Holy Supper, was one of the most exciting times of the year. Everyone anxiously awaited this meal because it was so special and wonderful. We would go to my Dad's family first on Christmas Eve for our first Holy Supper; then we would repeat it at my Mom's family and then we would go to church for the midnight service. Both Babas worked the entire day preparing the various foods and, somehow, they managed to have everything ready to eat at the same time, with no waste. We all marvel at how they did all that cooking on one day without the modern conveniences that we have today. On Christmas morning, we went to church and then spent the day with both families again.

With our gifts opened, the Christmas season ended, and it wasn't long until the time for the second or smaller Holy Supper and home blessings, around January 19th (Jiordanii). Following home blessing time, we entered The Great Lenten period before Easter. This new Church Calendar period included many extra church services, which were so beautiful and mysterious. We had services on Wednesday and Friday evenings and the vesper service on Saturday and Sunday evenings. The congregation sang along with our cantor, and the melodies still send us shivers when we hear them to this day.

As Great Lent was coming to an end, Holy Week was a special time for everyone. We needed to complete the Great Fast with prayer and confession, so that we could go to Holy Communion on Easter. By this time, the house needed to be cleaned and prepared from top to bottom. A priest friend once told me that the entire house had to be cleaned so that we and our homes would be prepared for the Resurrection of Our Lord (Holy Pascha). During Holy or Passion week, there were many extra services and especially memorable were the Thursday night Gospel service and the Good Friday service, with the Tomb of Christ.

On Holy Saturday, we prepared the various foods for the Easter Basket. The basket, covered with a scarf hand embroidered by Baba, was taken to the midnight service. At some time in the early morning of Easter, the priest blessed the baskets. I can still remember the excitement of going home and breaking our fast by tasting something from that basket. On Easter Sunday, after attending the Pascal Divine Liturgy, we spent the day with our relatives, again many of them coming from far and near.

Church and family were the center of our lives. Over the years, things have changed and the celebration of these special holidays isn't always as it used to be. I am especially thankful that I have the memories of those wonderful days and will always cherish them. Thanks to my brother, Sub-deacon Michael Pirich, we still have the traditional Christmas Eve Holy Supper and remember all the past Holy Suppers that our Babas and Mother prepared for us. Hopefully, they look down on us and smile as we say the prayer to begin our special meal.

Matshuka Marion Mitchell

PREPARING

At this time in many parts of the United States, we are either experiencing the storms of winter or we are expecting them. Some of us prepare by getting out the snow shovel or snow blower, stock up on deicer to put on the walkways, make sure our auto is winterized and air out the mufflers, gloves and heavy outerwear. We hope we are ready, but then we can have a hard winter with accumulation of snow and ice on the roof and must find someone to shovel it off. The unexpected happens.

We think back on Neal Beidleman, who survived the ill-fated 1996 expedition in which eight climbers died on Mount Everest. Some of them paid as much as $65,000 for a chance to scale the world's highest peak. They thought that they were well prepared for the arduous hike. But they died. Why?

In assessing what went wrong, the survivor, Beidleman said: "Tragedies and disasters ... are not a result of a single decision, a single event, or a single mistake. They are the culmination of things in your life. Something happens and it becomes a catalyst for all the things you've had at risk." On Everest, that "something" was a raging blizzard.

According to journalist Todd Burgess: "If not for the storm, the climbers may have gotten away with taking so many risks. But the storm exposed their weaknesses."

The things at risk in our lives today – matters of spiritual indifference or disobedience – can overwhelm us when the unexpected storms come.

Obedience to Christ and following the commandments by living a life centered in God won't eliminate the tempests of life, but they do determine whether we fall or stand in the storm.

* * * * * *

A Christian does good deeds, but doing good deeds does not make one a Christian.

SAINTS CALENDAR

My neighbor up the road who is legally blind called me to ask me to pray for his wife, who had been diagnosed with breast cancer. He knows that part of my morning ritual is to pray at my kiot, which stands in front of my home, backed by a beautiful spruce tree. I promised him that I would add both of their names to my prayer list.

As I was selecting a saint for the month of December, I found one who had healed both the blind and a woman with breast cancer. What a specific saint whose life story I could translate and share with my troubled neighbor and with my readers. In the Lives of the Saints, I found this about St. Patapius commemorated on December 8/12.

Blessed Patapius was born in Thebes in Egypt in the 7th century. His parents were practicing Christians and brought him up in the fear of God and need to do good in the world. When he reached his majority, he left home, his parents, and his friends to settle in the Egyptian desert where he could give full attention to fasting, praying, and various spiritual endeavors – a lifestyle pleasing to God.

Soon, news about his sanctity spread and many people sought him out and began praising him for his virtuous life. This upset him as he felt that he was being pulled from the path he had set for himself by the praise of mankind.

He left Egypt and decided that it would be easier to hide in the crowd of a big city. He went to Constantinople and built a small hut near the city wall close to the famous Blachnarae Church. For a time, he found the anonymity he was seeking. He was unknown to anyone but God. He talked only to God in constant prayer. But how long can a light be lit on a hill before it is not noticed? (Matt 5:14) So a man doing good deeds almost unto holiness cannot be hid. God, Himself, and Patapius's good deeds opened up his life to the needs of others.

A young boy, blind from birth, was led by God to the hut of St. Patapius. He asked the blessed one to pray to God for him so that he might be given sight to enable him to look upon God's creation and praise God all the more. The blessed one saw the youngster's faith and prayed: "In the name of Jesus Christ, grant the blind - light and to the dead - life." The child got his wish he could see! He began to praise and thank God and gave testimony to all who marveled that he had sight.

This good news spread and St. Patapius was again sought out by many who begged for his prayers. Many cures of body and souls resulted. Another one of the miracles which was recorded and verified was the man who had spent large amounts of money going from doctor to doctor looking for relief for the edema which was filling his body with liquid. He heard of blessed Patapius, went to him and with tears asked the blessed one to pray for him. He was cured.

St. Patapius also exorcised many evil spirits from people. These spirits could be seen leaving a person in the form of smoke coming out of their mouths. Many cases are graphically recorded in the Lives of the Saints.

A woman developed breast cancer. She sought medical help to no avail. When her condition was critical, with a festering wound and more, she came to St. Patapius and knelt at his feet and with many tears and prayers begged him to help her. St. Patapius, by the power of the Cross, prayer and ointing with oil cured her. It is interesting that the Sacrament of Healing - Oiling practiced today is very similar.

St. Patapius died at a very old age and was buried in the church of St. John.

PRAYER: "O holy Patapius, pray to God for me, for with great fervor I ask you to help me, for you are a speedy help and intercessor for our souls. Amen."

OVER THERE

In the Carpathians the young girls wore their headkerchiefs tied under their chins. If their hair was done up they could go bareheaded. Married women, on the other hand, were not allowed to go bareheaded outside the house. They tied their headkerchiefs in back. They wore their hair in a bun.

* * * * * *

Godwill is increased by the gathering of the Church, by fellowship in faith, by association in baptism, by the bond of grace received, by communion in the sacraments. The bond of grace tends mightily to increase goodwill.

St. Ambrose

Undique (from everywhere)

The delicious food, the opening of the gifts, and the beauty of the decorations can diminish or hide the real meaning of the event we are celebrating. Jesus Christ is the center of Christmas and one cannot celebrate the feast without Him. A starting point would be, as a family or with a group of friends, to read from St. Luke 2:1-20. Then after silent reflection everyone could share what Jesus means to them.

When "God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen" was written in the Middle Ages, the words had different meanings. "Merry" meant great or mighty. "Rest" meant to keep or make.

Kutia and uzvar (boiled grain, especially wheat, and fruit compote) are traditionally served after the Nativity Vigil Service.

Looking at the Christmas tree we see it not only as a decoration but as a reminder that everlasting life was given on a tree.

Advent or the Nativity Lent is a holy and sacred season, regardless of how we may ignore it. The Church issues guidelines and standards of behavior for the benefit of its followers ... not to deprive them but to help them to inscribe their names in the book of life. (Rev 21:27)

Dear Lord, thank You for your Holy Spirit, who comforts us in time of sorrow, guides us to do Your will, and takes our prayers to your throne. Help us to trust that all things are in your hands. Amen.

Why do some choir members not listen to the sermon?

Icons are not the same as ordinary paintings. An icon painter does not sign his name. Living people are never used as models for icons. God the Father never appears on icons except as a hand that blesses a saint from the top corner of the icon (as in icons of St. George). God is not depicted because He has not been seen. Jesus has and so he is depicted.

A holy Father commenting on the beatitudes said: "Blessed are the peacemakers." "A peacemaker is a person who gives peace to another; but one cannot give another what one does not possess oneself. Because of this, the Lord wants you first to be yourself filled with the blessings of peace, and then to communicate it to those who have need of it."



Editor's Notes

If all goes as scheduled, you should be reading this copy at the beginning of December. This means that for about three weeks you will be in the Fasting Period, which started on November 15/28. This is a time of preparation for the Coming of the Christ Child on December 25/January 7. It is not practical to tell you not to worry about presents, decorating your home, and buying food for the feast day. All this is necessary, but you must leave time for prayer, fasting and meditation. This is what will give you the "Christmas Spirit."

Lately, there has been much publicity on religious discrimination. The Equal Employment Commission has stated that complaints have risen 85 percent in the last decade with 20 percent of this coming in the last year. This brings to mind the Orthodox believers of fifty years ago who were told not to take Christmas off. It was celebrated on January 7 at that time. They were told that they would be fired or the least that would be done to them is they would lose the day's wages. Most of them did not report for their "shift" and decided to take the consequences. They would not profane the Holy Day by working as if it were a regular day. We admire their steadfastness. But are disturbed by the tendency of some of their grandchildren to forgo their religious obligations to play sports. We find them missing from church services with the permission of their parents! What a contrast in priorities. Parents – give a list of days and times when your child will not be free to participate in activities. It is up to you to show what is more important in life.

I will be sending out the billings for the Packet Plan. I would appreciate a response as soon as possible. Last year was wonderful. Most people and parishes answered in two weeks. We bill for a year in advance. The price per copy per packet of at least 10 is 35¢ a copy. This is a good time for you to sponsor a gift of a packet for your parish or to get a packet for distributing to friends and relatives.

We have written previously about our special love for St. Seraphim of Sarov. Before she died, Matushka Dzvonchik gave us a fragment of a stole of St. Seraphim's. She told us how she received it from a relative of Fr. Basil's with instructions to give it to him. She told us the whole history of its acquisition. Needless to say, we received it with awe and studied his life with greater attention. As I was reading today's meditation, which centered on St. Seraphim, I came across this statement: "For peace of soul one must try to have a joyful spirit." This tied in with his well-known saying: "Acquire peace and thousands around you will be saved. When a person is in a peaceful state of mind, he can from himself give out to others the light of illumination of the reason.

What wonderful instruction:

Peace, joy and sharing. What a wonderful goal for Christmas from one of my favorite saints - Seraphim of Sarov.

Christ is Born! Glorify Him!

Matushka Nina Stroyen

FUNDS

Thank you so much for your donations to the funds. All of them are in need. Postage costs have gone out of sight. There is always a need to tell about the Orthodox Church. One of the places where Mission copies go is to prisons. We get very many letters of appreciation for these copies as so few prisons have any Orthodox coverage. The articles by Margaret Psycharcyk are telling us about the great need for continuing to send copies to Alaska. We can only do this with your help. Spasebo to the following:

FOR POSTAGE: Mrs. Frances Krul, Mr. and Mrs. Ted Demos, Helen H. Miller, Mary Arden, Marge German, Dorothy Wasylko, Henry Grabowski, Jean Kutzer, Steve and Lenora Evancho, Larissa Williams, Sharon Schrenzel, A. Pinko, Margaret Yanchisin, Inge Lausen, Beth Garland, Louis Michalko, Anna Garcia.

FOR ALASKA: Ethel Watlock, Eleanor Green, Nancy Collins.

FOR MISSION: Barbara Ondo, Marge German.

FOR BOTH ALASKA AND MISSION: Steve and Lenora Evancho, Dorothy Wasylko.



One reason for the decline in people observing the traditional Christmas Eve Supper or Svatee Vecher is that families are changing. Traditional families with both parents and several children and perhaps some close relatives are only a memory for many. Instead, there are more single adults, single parents, empty-nesters and working couples without children.

Busy lives also play a part in a giving up of the tradition of a special meal of fasting and prayer. Many people perceive preparing the meal as time-consuming although that's not absolutely necessary.

Several years ago, my niece Alexis was gracious enough to write out a to-do list for those who fit into one of the above categories. It lets even those who live alone or have restrictions of some sort to carry on this tradition of our people. Here is what she wrote about the Christmas Eve Supper or Vigilia.

The meal must be what is called a strict fast meal: no meat or dairy products. The food should be simple – no shrimp, caviar or lobster.

It is traditional to have 12 different dishes, but this is not absolutely necessary. Take as much as is possible from the following list and add any which are traditional with your family.

First, slice several onions, saute them in a little oil and use a little in many of the following recipes.

Buy a can of sardines or tuna or salmon or a fillet of fried fish from the supermarket. Drain fish and arrange on plate. Add a bit of chopped onion, if desired.

Open a can of lima beans or green peas. Heat and drain and eat as is or make soup with part of can. To make soup, add a finely diced potato to the liquid. Simmer until soft. Add lima beans and/or mashed green peas. Take some of the sauteed onions, add a bit of flour, lightly brown making a saprashka or roux. Add some water. Cook until

(Continued on Page 59 Col. 3)

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CHRIST IS BORN! GLORIFY HIM!

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WINTER'S GRACE

Two sisters were preparing the Thanksgiving dinner. They had made their special stuffing, spooned it into the turkey, and were preparing to pop it into the oven. They got out some aluminum foil and were getting ready to cover the meat to help hold in the juices and keep it from over-browning.

And then it happened!

Mary had started to place the foil on the turkey, when Anna snapped: "That's not right! You are suppose to put the shiny side out."

"That's ridiculous," Mary replied. "Everybody knows the shiny side goes on the inside." A heated discussion followed with Anna stalking out of the room in a huff. The fact is that both sisters were right, it makes no difference which side of the foil is out.

Isn't this so true in so many families and parishes? A lot of the arguments are just as unimportant – like what color the carpet should be or even how to pinch the perohi!

St. Paul told Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:22-26: to avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife." Fundamental teachings and traditions of the Church need to be guarded, but arguments about trivialities are not beneficial and only divide us and draw us away from God's purpose for us.

We must remember Timothy's words to be "gentle to all" and to practice humility. And we must decide – no more silly arguments in our family or in the church!

WHEN WE FORGET OUR PRIORITIES, WE ARGUE ABOUT TRIVIALITIES.

Home Bible Reading Schedule

DECEMBER 2003

1 2 Thess 1:1-10	17 1 Tim 5:22-6:11
2 2 Thess 1:10-2:2	18 1 Tim 6:17-21
3 2 Thess 2:1-12	19 2 Tim 1:1-2,8-18
4 2 Thess 2:13-3:5	20 Gal 5:22-6:2
5 2 Thess 3:6-18	**21 Eph 6:10-17**
6 Gal 1:3-10	22 2 Tim 2:20-26
7 Eph 4:1-6	23 2 Tim 3:16-4:4
8 1 Tim 1:1-7	24 2 Tim 4:9-22
9 1 Tim 1:8-14	25 Titus 1:5-14
10 1 Tim 1:18-2:8-15	26 Titus 1:15-2:10
11 1 Tim 3:3-1-13	27 Eph 1:16-22
12 1 Tim 4:4-8,16	**28 Col 1:12-18**
13 Gal 3:8-12	29 Heb 3:5-11,17-19
14 Eph 5:9-19	30 Heb 4:1-13
15 1 Tim 5:1-10	31 Heb 5:11-6:8
16 1 Tim 5:11-21	

BIBLE STUDY

Each time we read a passage in the Scriptures, we get a different message from it. On December 14, we will read from Ephesians 5:9-19 and this year the words from verse 8: "Now you are light in the Lord" grab our attention and seem to give us a deeper understanding of the instructions given us in the reading.

St. Paul tells us "Now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of light."

It often appears to us that things do not change – especially people's characters. We think that we shall always remain as we are and so will everyone. But this is not true. We are all changing everyday. Change is a law of life.

St. Paul advises us to look upon our past as the time of darkness – the time when we had not received illumination by the Holy Spirit and by the (examined) experiences of life. The present is the time of the Spirit. He comes to us and enlightens us. He removes the obstacles which get in the way of our understanding of the visible and invisible world as it truly is.

Thus, our daily life is a most important time. It is the time of our awakening and unfolding. It is the time of the flowering of our soul and our spirit. In order for this process to continue as it ought, we must adopt an attitude which leads to this sort of development. We must dedicate ourselves to all that is good and right and true.

We must be honest with ourselves, with our neighbors and with God. We must look for every opportunity – or better yet, use every opportunity to be good and right and true. We must be generous, loving, and just. This is our true nature. Let us show it in our daily lives.

The time which is past had enough of the works of darkness. We do not need them anymore. We are free of them. Now let us be what we truly are: children of Light!

Fr. Ihor George Kutash

LIGHTER MOMENT

Mary asked her Sunday School class to draw pictures of their favorite Bible stories. She was puzzled by Johnny's picture. It showed four people in an airplane. She asked him which story in the Bible it represented. "The flight to Egypt," said Johnny. "I just heard the priest read about it in church."

Mary looked it over and said: "I see. That must be Mary, Joseph and Baby Jesus. But who is the fourth person?" "Oh! that's Pontius - the Pilot," replied Johnny.

* * * * * *

The real measure of our wealth is the treasure we have in heaven.